

# HEPATITIS C: TESTING POSITIVE

Arizona Department of Corrections  
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program  
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Testing positive for hepatitis C may be scary, but the important thing is to find out more about how to live a healthy life. Information is the key to living well with hepatitis C.

## Time is on Your Side

Hepatitis C is a slow disease, and can take 20 to 30 years before serious health problems develop. Additionally, 15-20% of those infected with hepatitis C will naturally "clear" the virus, and not develop a chronic infection. Normally, you will have plenty of time to learn about hepatitis and make the best decisions for your health.

## Staying Healthy

Here are a few simple ways to protect your liver and live a healthy life:

- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Eat a healthy and balanced diet (limit fat and salt as much as possible).
- Drink at least 8 glasses of water daily.
- Exercise regularly.
- Be honest with health staff about behaviors before, during, and after incarceration.
- Avoid or cut down on tobacco use.
- Don't take vitamins that contain iron.
- Try to manage stress and keep a positive attitude.

## Protecting Others

Hepatitis C is transmitted through **blood-to-blood** contact. Your blood has to get into someone else's body through an opening or a cut in their skin to transmit the virus. This can be through sharing of personal items (such as a razor), drug or tattooing/piercing equipment, or through a sex act. You can not transmit hepatitis C through sharing eating utensils, a bathroom, a water fountain, or a shower.

## Medical Treatment

Many people with HCV lead normal healthy lives and may not need or qualify for medical treatment. Treatment is decided on an individual basis. It depends on several factors, such as the progression of the disease, lifestyle behaviors (such as drug and alcohol use) and age.

## Resources for more information:

- National HCV Prison Coalition/ Hepatitis C Awareness Project - Publishes free newsletter "Hepatitis C Awareness." To subscribe, write HCAP, PO Box 41803, Eugene, OR, 97404.
- The National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse - Patient education materials on hepatitis C. To obtain free copies, write NDDIC: 2 Information Way, Bethesda, MD, 20892-3570.
- Doing Your Time with Peace of Mind - A Free Meditation Manual for Prisoners by Doug Booth. Send requests to Heart Mountain Prison Project, 1223 So. St. Francis Drive, Suite C, Santa Fe, NM 87505
- Latino Organization for Liver Awareness (LOLA), P.O. Box 842 Throggs Neck Station Bronx, NY 10465
- HCV Advocate - Newsletter Subscription \$20/year (\$10 if on fixed income). Tides Center/HCSF, PO Box 427037, San Francisco, CA, 94142-7037.
- HEPNews - Newsletter subscription \$10/year. Hepatitis Education Project, 4603 Aurora Avenue N., Seattle, WA, 98103.
- Arizona Department of Health Services, Hepatitis C Program. Telephone: (602) 364-3658 or 1-800-496-9660.